

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

STRATEGIC FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME

Issue

1. To seek the Committee's views on the revised forward work programme.

Recommendation

2. The Committee is invited to consider the revised forward work programme attached to this paper.

Background

3. Standing Order 9.9 requires each subject committee to maintain a rolling programme of work covering periods of at least 12 months, and to consult other committees and the Assembly Cabinet on the programme before notifying plenary. The forward work programme is a strategic document, providing an overview of the Committee's broad priorities for the next 18 to 24 months, which is supported by a more detailed work programme.
4. The Committee considered a draft forward work programme at the 24 January meeting (paper LGH-01-01 (p.6) refers). The work programme has subsequently been put to the other subject committees and the Assembly Cabinet. This has resulted in relatively few changes to the work programme. Some subject committees identified issues in which they had an interest and asked to be kept informed of progress. The Cabinet suggested that the introduction of community strategies and consideration of the community leadership role of local authorities should be reflected in the list of the Committee's priorities (which already identified the modernisation of local government as a priority). They also pointed out the need for the Committee to review the operation of the Local Government Partnership Scheme.
5. The work programme recognises the Committee's plans for a policy review on community regeneration following the completion of the review on housing stock transfer.
6. Subject to the Committee's views on the revised draft, the forward work programme will be tabled, along with the Committee's progress report, for a plenary debate on 15 May.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND HOUSING COMMITTEE

FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME: MAY 2001 TO DECEMBER 2002

Introduction

1. The Local Government and Housing Committee is one of the Assembly's seven subject committees. The Committee's remit is based on the portfolio of Edwina Hart, the Minister for Finance, Local Government and Communities. It covers local government policy and finance issues, housing, urban regeneration and crime reduction. The remit does not include Edwina Hart's responsibilities as Finance Minister.
2. The responsibilities of the subject committees are set out in Standing Orders, as reproduced at **Annex 1**.
3. Standing Order 9.9 requires each subject committee to maintain a rolling programme of work covering periods of at least 12 months. The Committee must consult other committees and the Assembly Cabinet on the programme before notifying plenary.
4. The Panel of Chairs has agreed that committees' work programmes should be strategic and cover an 18 to 24 month time frame. This strategic programme is supported by a more detailed programme covering at least a three month period.

Aims and objectives

5. The Committee's aim is to achieve a better quality of life for the people of Wales and to promote better, simpler government. Its objectives are:
 - To help local people, particularly those living in disadvantaged areas, develop confident communities, with decent housing, good local facilities and high quality environment, which is non-threatening and free from crime;
 - To deliver value for money for the people of Wales, with better and more efficient services;
 - To streamline the Assembly's work and give far greater weight to the needs and views of our partners and the public, including under-represented groups.
6. These aims and objectives correspond with those set out in *betterwales.com*, the Assembly's strategic plan.

Priorities

7. In taking forward its responsibilities for contributing to policy development (Standing Order 9.7 (i)), the Committee attaches particular importance to:

- The development of a national housing strategy, with a view to ensuring that everyone has a decent home and homelessness is eliminated;
- The modernisation of local government, including the development of new political management structures, the introduction of policy agreements, the development of the best value regime, the introduction of community strategies and consideration of the community leadership role of local authorities;
- The implementation and development of the revised standard spending assessment formula, so that revenue support for local authorities is allocated on the basis of a fairer assessment of need.

8. The Committee will play a major role in progressing many of the issues for early action which are identified in Chapter 4 of *betterwales.com*. These are set out at **Annex 2**.

9. To date, the Committee has given priority to contributing to the development of emerging strategies and initiatives across the full range of the Minister's local government and housing responsibilities. It has also undertaken a review of the policy of transferring local authority housing into community ownership, with the report shortly due for consideration by plenary. This review has examined the emerging model for community ownership, as well as wider issues such as whether alternative approaches could generate the finance necessary to overcome the backlog of repair and essential modernisation work for council housing.

10. Following the policy review of housing stock transfer, the Committee intends to undertake a review of the role of community groups in community regeneration. The precise terms of reference for the review are being developed, taking account of the work which has already been undertaken in the context of the *Communities First* concept. One area which may be examined is the scope for streamlining existing community regeneration programmes and how to improve the arrangements for their delivery.

11. The Committee will also consider each year a report reviewing the implementation of the Local Government Partnership Scheme, prior to the consideration of the report by plenary.

Other issues

12. The Committee will also need to:

- consider proposals for the Assembly's budget (Standing Order 9.8 (ii));

- consider secondary legislation as appropriate (Standing Order 9.8 (i) / 22);
- undertake scrutiny of the Minister (Standing Order 9.11);
- review cross-cutting issues such as equal opportunities and sustainable development.

Method of working

13. In taking forward its work programme, the Committee intends to continue to work in an open and participative way. It will liaise closely with all of the Assembly's partners in the public, private and voluntary sectors, particularly those in local government. The Committee will continue to develop its relationship with the Local Government Partnership Council.

Detailed work programme

14. The Committee's detailed work programme for the remainder of 2001 is attached at **Annex 3**.

Committee Secretariat

April 2001

Annex 1

ROLE OF SUBJECT COMMITTEES

EXTRACT FROM STANDING ORDERS

9.7 Each subject committee shall

(i) contribute to the development of the Assembly's policies within the fields for which the relevant Assembly Secretary is accountable to the Assembly;

(ii) keep under review the expenditure and administration connected with their implementation; and

(iii) keep under review the discharge of public functions in those fields by public, voluntary and private bodies.

9.8 Each subject committee shall also, within the relevant fields,

- (i) advise on proposed legislation affecting Wales, including performing its functions under Standing Order 22;
- (ii) provide advice to the Assembly Cabinet on matters relating to allocation of the Assembly's budget in accordance with Standing Order 19;
- (iii) perform its function under Standing Order 21 (complaints);
- (iv) perform any functions assigned to it under the Code of Practice on Public Appointments Procedure made by the Assembly under Standing Order 20; and
- (v) consider matters referred to it by the Assembly within its fields.

Annex 2

***betterwales.com*: ISSUES FOR EARLY ACTION**

[NB To be revised in the light of the updated version of *betterwales.com*]

Table 7: Better quality of life

'Help local people, particularly those living in disadvantaged areas, develop confident communities, with decent housing, good local facilities and high quality environment, which is non-threatening and free from crime.'

- *Communities First* - community-led action to improve our most deprived communities
- A reduction in the proportion of people who feel very worried about safety on the streets to below the 1998 figure of 11 per cent, by supporting local Crime and Disorder Partnerships, the Crime Reduction Programme and other community development strategies
- A reduction in the temptation for young people to engage in anti-social behaviour by using the £25 million Children and Youth Partnership Fund to provide constructive activities
- To reduce the number of occupied houses in serious disrepair to less than 4 per cent of the stock, by 2002, and to extend the Care and Repair Scheme to all parts of Wales
- To use more private funding to improve poor quality housing estates; for all new social housing to be of good quality with high standards of safety and energy efficiency and located

- in attractive, non-threatening environments designed to reduce crime
- The proportion of vacant social housing to be cut to less than 3 per cent, the number of homeless families living in temporary housing to be below 500 and the need for rough sleeping to be eliminated
- 30,000 'fuel poor' households, receiving income or disability benefits, to be covered by the new Home Energy Efficiency Scheme

Table 9: Better, simpler government

'Deliver value for money for the people of Wales, with better and more efficient services'

- To improve the accountability, responsiveness and decision making of local councils, by working with the Welsh Local Government Association on the development of new political management arrangements, by April 2001
- To develop, and put in place by April 2001, the first Policy Agreement between the Assembly and all local authorities, within a national framework developed in partnership with the Welsh Local Government Association: the Agreements to focus on the specific and measurable improvements required to achieve shared policy objectives
- 50 per cent of local authority services to have been subject to best value reviews with best value inspections demonstrating improvements in the standards of services. No local authority directly provided services to run at a deficit, by March 2002
- A fairer formula for distributing revenue support grant to local authorities, from April 2001

'Streamline our work and give far greater weight to the needs and views of our partners and the public, including under-represented groups'

- The role of the Commission for Local Administration in Wales to be extended to include that of a Housing Ombudsman for registered social landlords and a Standards Board for local government, by 2001
- Better co-ordination of local services by working with the Welsh Local Government Association to agree a framework for community planning (compatible with their Local Agenda 21 strategies), by April 2001, with a review being completed, within the same timescale, of the requirement on councils to produce plans

DETAILED FORWARD WORK PROGRAMME:

SUMMER AND AUTUMN TERMS 2001

Meeting	Item	Agenda Items
Wednesday 2 May 9.30am	1	Minister's Report (Written)
	2	Homelessness Commission – Progress report
	3	Crime and disorder – Progress report
	4	<i>Communities First</i> – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise
	5	Presentation on the work of the fire services in Wales
	6	Progress report by the Committee under Standing Order 9.9
	7	Forward work programme – Consideration of final strategic forward work programme
Wednesday 16 May 9.30am	1	Minister's Report
	2	Business rates – Results of first year review of transitional rate relief scheme
	3	Community strategies – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise
	4	Public Private Partnerships and the Private Finance Initiative in Wales – Consideration of issues in the discussion paper considered by plenary on 5 December

Thursday 24 May 2.00pm		Scope for informal Committee activity
Wednesday 6 June 9.30am	1	Minister's Report (Written)
	2	Supporting People – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise
	3	Funding of Care and Repair services in Wales – Consideration of report of review
	4	National housing strategy – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise

Meeting	Item	Agenda Items
Wednesday 20 June 9.30am	1	Minister's Report
	2	'Rethinking Construction' – Progress report
	3	Review of the local authority Housing Strategy and Operational Plan (HSOP) system – Consideration of working group's report
	4	Consumer protection in housebuilding and repair
	5	Social housing – Emerging models for access and allocation
	6	Low cost home ownership schemes
	7	Annual report on social inclusion – Consideration of format of 2002 report
Wednesday 4 July 9.30am	1	Minister's Report (Written)
	2	Budgets – Consideration of Minister's issues paper

	3	Proposed Order allowing local authorities to take account of 'non-commercial' matters when considering tenders and awarding contracts – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise
	4	<i>Communities First</i> – Selection of communities for inclusion in the programme
	5	Housing for the elderly
	6	Audit of housing advice services – Consideration of report
	7	Presentation on the work of the Best Value Housing Inspectorate
Wednesday 18 July 9.30am	1	Minister's Report
	2	Local government finance – Progress report on the review of the local government finance system
	3	Local Government Partnership Scheme – Review of the operation of the Scheme
	4	UK Fuel Poverty Strategy – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise
	5	Tenant participation and tenant compacts – Progress report
	6	Housing – Consideration of research programme
Wednesday 24 October 9.30am	1	Minister's Report (Written)
	2	Homelessness Commission – Consideration of final report
	3	Working group on improving fire safety - Progress report
	4	<i>Communities First</i> – Consideration of policy framework
	5	Service and investment pressures facing local government – Presentation from the Welsh Local Government Association

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Meeting	Item	Agenda Items
Wednesday 7 November 9.30am	1	Minister's Report
	2	Review of the local authority Housing Strategy and Operational Plan (HSOP) system – Consideration of responses to consultation exercise
	3	Housing revenue account – Consideration of subsidy for 2002-03
	4	Budgets – Consideration of draft budget
Thursday 15 November 2.00pm		Scope for informal Committee activity
Wednesday 21 November 9.30am	1	Minister's Report (Written)
	2	Black and Minority Ethnic registered social landlord – Consideration of feasibility report
	3	Presentation on the work of the Rent Assessment Panel
Wednesday 5 December 9.30am	1	Minister's Report
	2	Voluntary organisations concerned with homelessness – Consideration of report of review
	3	The role of town and community councils

Committee Secretariat

24 April 2001